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SUBJECT: ELECTION 2007: SOUTHERN PDP GUBERNATORIAL PRIMARIES

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. This is a survey of the results of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial primaries in southern states, which took place December 9. Most candidates chosen were those who had pledged fealty to state governors or, where the governors were weak, to the PDP national leadership. Political parties have until February 13 to announce any changes on the gubernatorial slate to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). There is persistent speculation that several of the winners will not be able to withstand the blowback from opponents to their apparent victories. Changes in a few states may occur by the February deadline. End summary.

Lagos: Obasanjo's Decision Overturns Initial Result

¶2. (U) In Nigeria's most populous state, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro won a December 13 runoff election against Hilda Williams, widow of PDP aspirant Funsho Williams, who was murdered on July 27.

¶3. (C) The media had earlier reported Williams victorious. Guardian Political Editor Idowu Ajanaku told Palspec that after the initial runoff PDP leaders had declared Williams the winner, carrying out PDP National Deputy Chairman Bode George's desire to have a candidate he can control. (Ref A) At the time, President Obasanjo supported the move, Ajanaku said. However, Obanikoro protested that there was a miscount in the primary and took the case to the National PDP for arbitration. According to Ajanaku, at this juncture, Obasanjo sided in favor of Obanikoro. Apparently, Obanikoro was able to get some influential allies on his side. One was PDP Board of Trustees Chairman Anenih; the other was President Obasanjo's daughter.

¶4. (C) Professor Adeolu Durotoye, Political Science Lecturer at the University of Ibadan, told Poloff that PDP members saw Obanikoro as more favorable to the Lagos polity than Williams, who prior to the primary had never run for political office and did not even reside in Lagos before her husband's murder.

15. (C) Grassroots PDP politician and post contact Gbenga Awosanya was present to witness the primary vote. Awosanya told Palspec that although the election was subject to manipulation, there was no violence. Awosanya had been concerned that the National PDP was attempting to foist Williams on an unwilling PDP electorate, and voiced his fear to Palspec before the primary. Awosanya said that he and others in the Lagos PDP are starved for a winner, and Awosanya would likely leave the PDP if Obanikoro did not win the party nomination.

Rivers: Speaker Amaechi Wins, Deputy Governor Contesting

16. (C) The Rivers gubernatorial nomination process became a pawn on the presidential nomination chessboard. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi, Speaker of the State House of Assembly, was declared the PDP gubernatorial candidate for Rivers State. After the presidency pressured former Transport Minister Sekibo to drop from the race, Amaechi replaced Sekibo as Odili's preferred candidate. Media reporting said Amaechi received 6,527 votes while the runner-up, Senator Martins Yellowe, received only 28 votes. A number of aspirants purportedly walked out of the voting venue in protest of "financial inducements" offered by Governor Odili.

17. (C) On December 11, two days after winning the nomination, Amaechi was the recipient of unwanted attention. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) began to investigate and repeatedly detained him. Apparently, this was some of the lumber used to fustigate Odili in accepting the fact that his political preservation hinged on burying his quest for the presidential nomination. Once Odili relented, EFCC heat on Amaechi dissipated. Nevertheless, Miabiye Kuromiema, who

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works closely with Deputy Governor Sir Gabriel Toby at the Peace and Security Secretariat, told Poloff on December 27 that Toby and other PDP gubernatorial hopefuls had heard rumblings that Amaechi may be forced to step down. Toby and the other hopefuls are busy digging and gathering dirt on Amaechi to present to the PDP national secretariat in hopes that his victory gets cancelled and they get another chomp at the bit.

Bayelsa: Jonathan's Wins Primary, Chosen as Vice-President

18. (U) With Governor Goodluck Jonathan's December 17 appointment as PDP Vice-Presidential candidate, the Bayelsa PDP is considering who should replace him in the gubernatorial contest. Chief Timpre Sylva came in second to Jonathan in the primary race but garnered only 34 votes to Jonathan's 2,399.

19. (C) Jonathan's landslide came after the President made it clear he was the preferred candidate and that his leading opponent, Niger Delta Development Commission Executive Director for Finance and Administration, Timi Alaibe, should step out of the race. Following Jonathan's Vice-Presidential nomination, PDP officials submitted Francis Doukpola, a close Jonathan ally, as the PDP nominee for Bayelsa. SSG Godknows Igali, the state primary intermediary with Ijaw militant groups and a primary interlocutor with the state on hostage matters, was selected to be the deputy governor.

Cross River: Imoke Wins

110. (U) Liyel Imoke, former Minister of Power and Steel from 2003 to 2006 and close ally of outgoing Governor Duke, won the PDP's gubernatorial nomination in Cross River State.

Leading contenders were Deputy Governor Dr. Walter Eneji and Kanu Agabi, the former Minister of Justice.

Delta: State Secretary Uduaghan is the Candidate

¶11. (C) Governor James Ibori is apparently in presidential good graces after heavily financing the Yar'Adua presidential campaign and the holding of the PDP national convention. Back in favor again, Ibori was evidently rewarded for his largesse to the party. The PDP confirmed Ibori's handpicked successor, his cousin Emmanuel Uduaghan, as the Delta gubernatorial candidate. Uduaghan got the nod over 30 other hopefuls, including Deputy Governor Goodnews Agbi and Senator Oscar Ibru. The nomination of Uduaghan has many enemies. Uduaghan, an Itsekiri from Warri, is viewed unfavorably by the Ijaws in that troubled city which was the site of widespread ethnically-fueled electoral violence in 2003. Additionally, several of the other hopefuls, led by former Presidential Advisor Peter Okocha, have defected to the Action Congress. Ironically, before his rapprochement with President Obasanjo and while still a leper with the PDP, Governor Ibori had surreptitiously funded the Delta chapter of the AC as an alternative path for Uduaghan should the PDP nomination prove elusive.

Akwa Ibom: Akpabio Emerges from the Stalemate Victorious

¶12. (C) Akwa Ibom's PDP gubernatorial primaries ended in a stalemate on December 11 due to conflicting interests among party leaders. Governor Victor Attah's choice, his son in-law Udoma Ekarika, was defeated in the primaries by former Commissioner for Land and Housing Godswill Akpabio. Attah attempted to deny the nomination to Akpabio alleging irregularities in the voting. The 8,000 delegates at the December 9 primary began chanting protest songs, but mobile policemen arrived and a clash ensued, according to press reports. The gubernatorial aspirants and electoral panel members purportedly sneaked out of the venue with ballot boxes in tow, one of the irregularities about which Attah is complaining. Following a stalemate of three weeks, Akpabio

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was declared victor and his name was submitted to INEC.

Edo: Osunbor is a Compromise Candidate

¶13. (U) Senator Osherihimen Osunbor emerged as the PDP flag bearer after Odion Ugbesia withdrew from the race before the vote took place December 9. Chairman of the PDP's Board of Trustees, Tony Anenih, is from Edo and has been in perennial conflict with the powerful Igbinedion family over control of the party in that state; Anenih had earlier outmaneuvered Governor Lucky Igbinedion. Nevertheless, Anenih still saw his candidate, Ugbesia, deadlocked with Special Presidential Advisor Julius Ihonvbere, favored by many members of the party's national executive and the presidency. Senator Osunbor, a supporter of President Obasanjo's third term attempt, emerged as a compromise candidate.

Anambra: Uba Moves Closer to the Prize

¶14. (C) Special Presidential Advisor Andy Uba emerged as Anambra's PDP gubernatorial aspirant with 97 percent of the vote. Governor Ngige was ousted last year when APGA's Peter Obi obtained a count decision declaring that Obi had actually won the 2003 election. Prior to that court ruling, Ngige had been expelled from the PDP due to his feuding with Andy Uba and his younger brother Chris over de facto control of the

state government. Uba then orchestrated the PDP-controlled state assembly to impeach Obi. (Note: Ngige is now the Action Congress's gubernatorial candidate. However, apprehensive that the EFCC will anoint him, Ngige exited Nigeria and has not returned since. End note)

Abia: Presidential Advisor Wins

¶15. (U) After a three day postponement, Onyema Ugochukwu, Special Assistant for Public Communication and former Chairman of the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC), won the gubernatorial nomination. Governor Orji Kalu played almost no role because he and many of his supporters already abandoned the PDP for the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA).

Enugu: Governor Nnamani Chooses His Successor

¶16. (U) Governor Chimaroke Nnamani saw his protege, former Enugu State Commissioner for Justice, Sullivan Chime, easily win the nomination over Deputy Governor Okechukwu Itanyi as Nnamani's Ebeano faction again showed its strength in supporting its candidates. Nnamani had earlier suggested that both he and Itanyi should step down for new leadership.

Imo: National PDP Favorite Wins

¶17. (U) Senator Ifeanyichukwu Araraume, from the Okigwe zone, beat 21 other aspirants to become the PDP's gubernatorial candidate with 2,016 out of 7,514 votes cast. Araraume held the support of the national PDP against Governor Achike Udenwa, who has feuded with the national party in the past. Chief Hope Uzodinma from the Owerri zone came in second with 1,649 votes while Chief Tony Ezenna took third place with 1,388 votes. On December 19 PDP State Chairman Prince Marcelinus created some confusion when he reportedly announced Ezenna as the party's gubernatorial candidate after having already announced Araraume as the party's standard bearer. Press contacts confirmed Araraume's name was forwarded to INEC as the PDP's gubernatorial candidate for Imo state and the national PDP leadership approved Araraume's candidacy.

Ebonyi: Elechi a Surprise Choice

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¶18. (U) Governor Sam Egwu anointed a surprise candidate, Martin Elechi, former Commissioner for Public Works of the now defunct East Central State of Ebonyi. There is reportedly interest to replace Elechi, but he remains the PDP's choice.

Ekiti: Obasanjo Breaks Deadlock

¶19. (SBU) Obasanjo broke a deadlock in Ekiti State by choosing Mr. Segun Oni, favorite of the PDP state elders. Oni had been third in the voting but was chosen because President Obasanjo's personal attorney Afe Babashola preferred Oni to Yinka Akerele (who received the most votes) and Professor Segun Ojo. Ekiti PDP party members demonstrated peacefully in protest of the move. Babashola and former Governor Ayo Fayose were bitter opponents whose enmity reached a zenith last year. This was a factor in Obasanjo finally disowning Fayose, who, until last year, had the president's goodwill. Babashola and party elders friendly to him reportedly convinced Obasanjo and PDP headquarters

that Akerele and Ojo were close associates of Fayose--a political kiss of death.

Oyo: Demoted Akala Wins

¶20. (C) Backed by Oyo State political strongman Lamidi Adedibu, Deputy Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala, who served as governor during Governor Ladoja's controversial and unpopular impeachment, has been named the PDP's gubernatorial candidate in Oyo State. Traditional ruler Gbola Adesiyun complained to Poloff that Adedibu presented Akala as the only available candidate to PDP members.

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Ogun, Ondo, Osun: Sitting Governors Renominated

¶21. (U) Ogun State Governor Gbenga Daniel, Ondo State Governor Olusegun Agagu, and Osun State Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola all were re-nominated. Following the 2003 elections, the PDP changed the bylaws to require all sitting governors run for re-nomination.

¶22. (C) Comment: PDP gubernatorial "primaries" are more like caucuses. The actual vote totals reported in the press matter little as candidates often withdraw if they sense they will lose. Even after the announcement is made, the decision at the primary may not be final. Those who dislike the outcome will work with allies within the PDP hierarchy to overturn what has been done. With some exceptions, the successful PDP candidate had to win over a portion of the national PDP hierarchy but, most importantly, the incumbent PDP governor was on his side. In those states where opposition parties are weak and winning the PDP nomination is seen as equivalent to winning the election, fighting for the PDP nomination was fierce, and in most cases really not yet over. The political parties have until February 13th to notify INEC of any changes in their gubernatorial candidates. Given the intense infighting now taking place, several candidates may be replaced by the February deadline. End comment.
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